



Study Guide 2015-2016



Monty Python's SPAMALOT **Book, Lyrics, and Music by Eric Idle** **Music by John Du Prez**

Florida Standards

TH.912.O.1.4
TH.912.S.2.8
TH.912.C.1.6
TH.912.H.2.8
TH.912.S.1.1
TH.912.S.2.3

LA.1112.1.7.2
LA.91112.1.7.3
LA.1112.2.1.2
LA.1112.2.1.5
LA.1112.2.1.7

DA.912.C.2.1
DA.912.C.2.4
MU.912.C.1.1
MU.912.C.2.2
MU.912.C.3.1
MU.912.H.2.3

Content Advisory: Monty Python's *SPAMALOT* contains scantily clad performers and bawdy sexual content. If it were a movie, it would be rated PG-13

Monty Python's SPAMALOT

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Monty Python's SPAMALOT

An Introduction

Educators:

First, let me thank you for taking the time out of your very busy schedule to bring the joy of theatre arts to your classroom. We at Orlando Shakes are well aware of the demands on your time and it is our goal to offer you supplemental information to compliment your curriculum with ease and expediency.

With that in mind, we've redesigned our study guides to be more "user friendly." We've offered you activities that you may do in one class period with minimal additional materials. These exercises will aid you in preparing your students to see a production, as well as applying what you've experienced when you return to school. We've included Sunshine and Common Core Standards to assure you that those curriculum needs are being met.

It is our hope that by streamlining our guides they will invite you to dip in to grab historical background on an author or playwright, a concise plot summary and colorful character descriptions, discussion questions to explore in class or as writing assignments and interactive activities to bring the magic of live performance back to your classroom. And, of course, how to prepare your students to enjoy live theater.

We look forward to hosting you at the Lowndes Shakespeare Theater. Additionally, should you wish to bring our Actor/Educators into your classroom, we will work around your schedule. Feel free to contact us at Orlando Shakes should you have any questions or suggestions on how we can better serve you. We are always learning from you. Thank you for your tremendous work in nurturing our audiences of tomorrow.

Bravo!

Anne Hering
Director of Education



During the Performance

Theatre is a Team Sport

The **Playwright** writes the script. Sometimes it is from an original idea and sometimes it is adapted from a book or story. The Playwright decides what the characters say, and gives the Designers guidelines on how the play should look.

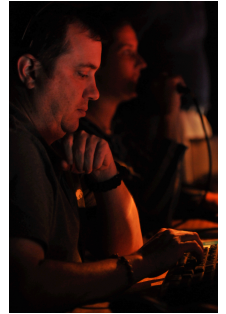


Costume Designer-
Denise Warner
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Director** creates the vision for the production and works closely with the actors, costume, set and lighting designers to make sure everyone tells the same story.

The **Actors** use their bodies and voices to bring the author's words and the director's ideas to life on the stage.

The **Designers** imagine and create the lights, scenery, props, costumes and sound that will compliment and complete the director's vision.



Sound Designer -
Britt Sanducky
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Stage Manager** assists the director during rehearsals by recording their instructions and making sure the actors and designers understand these ideas. The Stage Manager then runs the show during each performance by calling cues for lights and sound, as well as entrances and exits.



Stage Manager-Stacey
Renee Norwood
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Shop and Stage Crew** builds the set, props and costumes according to the designer's plans. The Stage Crew sets the stage with props and furniture, assists the actors with costume changes and operates sound, lighting and stage machinery during each performance.

The **Front of House Staff** welcomes you to the theater, takes your tickets, helps you find your seat and answers any question you may have on the day of performance.



Creative Team of The Merry Wives of Windsor
Photo: Rob Jones

The Theater is where it all takes place. Orlando Shakespeare Theater In Partnership with UCF is the only professional, classical theater company in Central Florida, reaching students and audiences in the surrounding eight counties.

Mission/Vision:

With Shakespeare as our standard and inspiration, the Orlando Shakespeare Theater In Partnership with UCF produces bold professional theater, develops new plays, and provides innovative educational experiences that enrich our community. Our vision is to create theater of extraordinary quality that encourages the actor/audience relationship, embraces the passionate use of language, and ignites the imagination.

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Enjoying Live Theater

The Actor/Audience Relationship

The Audience is the reason Live Theater exists. At Orlando Shakes, we cherish the Actor/Audience relationship, the unique give and take that exists during a performance which makes the audience an **ACTIVE** participant in the event. The actors see the audience just as the audience sees the actors, and every, laugh, snuffle, chuckle and gasp the audience makes effects the way the actor plays his next moment. We want you to be engaged, and to live the story with us!



There are certain Conventions of the Theatrical Event, like, when the lights go down you know that the show is about to start, and that the audience isn't encouraged to come and go during a performance. Here are some other tips to help you and your classmates be top notch audience members:

- Please make sure to turn off your cell phones. And **NO TEXTING!**
- Please stay in your seat. Try to use the restroom before you take your seat and stay in your seat unless there is an emergency.
- Please do not eat or drink in the theater.

Talkback

After the performance, the actors will stay on stage for about 10 minutes to hear your comments and answer any questions you have about the play, the production and what it means to be a professional actor. We'd love to hear what you felt about the play, what things were clear or unclear to you, and hear your opinions about what the play means. This last portion of the Actor/ Audience Relationship is so important to help us better serve you!

Here are some things to think about while watching the show. You might be asked these questions in the talkback!

1. What is the effect of actors playing multiple characters in the play? Is it confusing? Why or why not? How does it change the impact of the scenes?
2. How did the director and designers let you know the location had changed on stage?
3. How did you know time had passed?
4. Note when the actors directly address the audience. Why do you think they do this at some times and not others? How does it make you feel?

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About the Play

Summary



Act I

The Overture opens the show, before the Historian comes on stage to set the scene. His story is of a man with a great vision who gathered knights together in a Holy Quest (*Historian's Introduction to Act I*). The man is Arthur, King of the Britons, from the great land of England. After a quick correction in geography (*Finland/Fisch Schlapping Dance*), the show can finally begin! It is 932 A.D. in England, and King Arthur, joined by his servant Patsy, is "riding" through the land trying to find men to join his Round Table. Arthur is frustrated by several failed recruitment attempts, including one with an awfully resilient Black Knight, but his luck might not stay bad for long. In a near village, Sir Robin the Not-Quite-So-Brave-as-Sir-Lancelot and Sir Lancelot the Brave decide to enlist in the army, because unlike some other villagers, they are not yet dead (*Monk's Chant/He's Not Yet Dead*). Meanwhile, Arthur continues to look for able-bodied men, and soon finds Dennis Galahad and his mother, both of whom are politically active peasants that doubt Arthur is really a king. However, the Lady of the Lake, who is a temperamental diva and

years earlier pronounced Arthur King of the Britons, is called upon to convince the doubting Dennis (*Come With Me*), and her Laker Girls provide a cheer to everyone's delight (*Laker Girls Cheer*). After things have quieted down, the Lady of the Lake and Sir Galahad share an appropriately timed heart-felt moment (*The Song That Goes Like This*). And so, King Arthur is finally joined by Sir Bedevere the Strangely Flatulent, Sir Lancelot the Brave, Sir Dennis Galahad the Dashing Handsome, previously just Dennis Galahad, Sir Robin the Not-Quite-So-Brave-As-Sir-Lancelot, and the aptly named Sir Not-Appearing-In-This-Show (*All For One*). It is not long before they receive a quest from God himself to go in search of the Holy Grail, and they eventually make their way to the Las Vegas-like town of Camelot (*Knights of the Round Table*). There the Lady of the Lake encourages Arthur not to lose his way (*Find Your Grail*), and the Knights set off once again on their quest. Now at their destination, the Knights are scared away by a gang of taunting French sentries (*Run Away!*).

Act III ...Wait... No... Act II

After their defeat, at the castle, King Arthur is utterly disheartened, and having fled from the Frenchmen's taunting, the Knights find themselves scattered about in a dark and very expensive forest (*Historian's Introduction to Act II*). King Arthur and Patsy stumble upon the most feared group in all the land, the Knights who say "Ni". Though things seem rough, Patsy convinces Arthur all is not lost (*Always Look On The Bright Side of Life*). Robin and his Minstrels are also making their way through the

forest (*Brave Sir Robin*), and soon join back with King Arthur. As a payment for passing the bridge they guard, the Knights who say "Ni" demand, as their second sacrifice, not another shrubbery but a Broadway musical from King Arthur and his Knights (*You Won't Succeed On Broadway*). Elsewhere, the Lady of the Lake wonders why she has been left out of the quest (*The Diva's Lament (Whatever Happened To My Part)*), while Prince Herbert, the son of the King of Swamp Castle, waits in his tower for his rescuer to come (*Where Are You?*). Thankfully, luck is on Prince Herbert's side, because Sir Lancelot arrives to save him from the clutches of his father who evidently hates music (*His Name Is Lancelot*). Unable to complete his journey, King Arthur is thoroughly upset (*I'm All Alone*), until the Lady of the Lake arrives to give him her final words of encouragement (*Twice In Every Show*). And he is able to go on. Before their journey is complete the Knights of the Round Table encounter a pyromaniac Enchanter called "Tim", and then must defeat the Killer Rabbit of Antioch with a new type of weapon for which they receive thorough operating instructions from Brother Maynard and the Monks. The Knights overcome these obstacles and by the end are celebrating with a Broadway wedding (*Act II Finale*)



Monty Python's SPAMALOT

About the Play

Meet the Characters

The Court of Camelot

King Arthur of Britain
 Sir Lancelot the Homicidally
 Brave
 Sir Robin, the Not-Quite-So-
 Brave-as-Sir-Lancelot
 Sir Dennis Galahad, The
 Dashinglly Handsome
 Sir Bedevere, The Strangely
 Flatulent
 Patsy: King Arthur's trusty
 servant/steed and constant
 companion.
 Concorde: Lancelot's trusty
 servant/steed.
 Brother Maynard (Camelot's
 clergyman)

Sir Bors

Sir Not-Appearing-In-This-Show

Other characters

The Lady of the Lake
 Not Dead Fred
 Robin's Lead Minstrel
 The King of Swamp Castle (aka
 Herbert's Father)
 Prince Herbert
 French Taunter
 The Black Knight (A psychotic,
 "invincible" knight who will insist
 on fighting even after all his limbs
 have been cut off.)

The Head Knight who says
 "Ni!" (The very tall leader of the
 most feared cult in the land: the
 dreaded Knights who say Ni.)
 Tim the Enchanter
 Mrs. Galahad
 The Killer Rabbit of Caerbannog
 Swamp Castle Guards
 Two Sentries
 Historian (the Narrator)
 The Laker Girls (The Lady of the
 Lake's backup dancers/
 cheerleaders)
 Knights of the Round Table
 Robin's Minstrels
 God
 Holder of the Holy Grail

Musical Numbers

1. TUNING • ORCHESTRA
2. Overture • ORCHESTRA
3. Historians Introduction To Act I • Historian
4. Finland / Fisch Schlapping Dance • MAYOR, VILLAGERS
5. Monks Chant / He Is Not Dead Yet • FRED, LANCE, ROBIN & MEMBERS OF THE ENSEMBLE
6. Come With Me • KING ARTHUR, LADY OF THE LAKE
7. Laker Girls Cheer • LAKER GIRLS, KING ARTHUR, ENSEMBLE MEN
8. The Song That Goes like This • SIR GALAHAD & LADY OF THE LAKE
9. He Is Not Dead Yet (Playoff) • SIR LANCELOT AND ENSEMBLE MEN
10. All For One • KING ARTHUR, PATSY, SIR ROBIN, SIR LANCELOT, SIR GALAHAD & SIR BEDEVERE
11. THE Knights Of The Round Table / The Song That Goes Like This (Reprise) • LADY OF THE LAKE, KING ARTHUR, PATSY, SIR ROBIN, SIR LANCELOT, SIR GALAHAD, SIR BEDEVERE & ENSEMBLE
12. Find Your Grail • LADY OF THE LAKE, KING ARTHUR, PATSY, SIR ROBIN, SIR LANCELOT SIR GALAHAD, SIR BEDEVERE & ENSEMBLE
13. Run Away! • FRENCH TAUNTERS, KING ARTHUR. PATSY, SIR ROBIN, SIR LANCELOT, SIR GALAHAD, SIR BEDEVERE & COMPANY
14. The Intermission
15. Historian's Introduction To Act II • HISTORIAN
16. Always Look On The Bright Side Of life • PATSY, KING ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF NI
17. Brave Sir Robin • SIR ROBIN & MINSTRELS
18. You Won't Succeed On Broadway • SIR ROBIN AND ENSEMBLE
19. Diva's Lament (Whatever Happened To My Part?) • LADY OF THE LAKE
20. Where Are You? • PRINCE HERBERT
21. His Name Is Lancelot • SIR LANCELOT, SIR ROBIN, SIR GALAHAD, PRINCE HERBERT & ENSEMBLE
22. I'm All Alone • KING ARTHUR, PATSY AND ENSEMBLE
23. Twice In Every Show • LADY IN THE LAKE, KING ARTHUR
24. Act II Finale • THE COMPANY
25. (Company Bow) - Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life • THE COMPANY

Monty Python's SPAMALOT

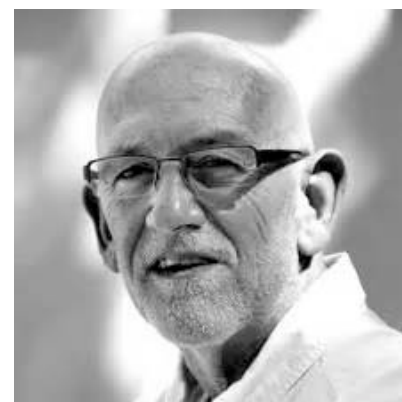
About the Play

Meet the Playwright



Eric Idle (Book and Lyrics)

Eric Idle (Book, lyrics, and music) has multi-hyphenated his way through life assiduously avoiding a proper job, from a writer and actor in the legendary "Monty Python" TV series and movies, to the creator and director of "The Rutles," the pre-fab four, whose legend will last a lunchtime. He has appeared on stage in drag singing rude songs at Carnegie Hall and the Hollywood Bowl as well as performing in two highly successful tours, *Eric Idle Exploits Monty Python* (2000) and *The Greedy Bastard Tour* (2003), for which he journeyed 15,000 miles across North America in a bus. *HIS GREEDY BASTARD DIARY* of that tour is published by Harper Collins. His play *PASS THE BUTLER* ran for five months in London's West End; he has written two novels, *HELLO SAILOR* and *THE ROAD TO MARS*, a children's book, *THE QUITE REMARKABLE ADVENTURES OF THE OWL AND THE PUSSYCAT*, and a bedside companion, *THE RUTLAND DIRTY WEEKEND BOOK*.



John Du Prez (Music)

John Du Prez, a Trevelyan Scholar at Christ Church, Oxford, and Associate of the Royal College of Music, entered the film industry in 1978 composing additional music for *MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN*. This began a long association with Eric Idle, leading eventually to their current writing partnership. He has scored more than 20 feature films including *THE MEANING OF LIFE*, *A PRIVATE FUNCTION*, *A FISH CALLED WANDA*, *ONCE BITTEN*, *UHF* and *TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES I, II AND III*. Other Python projects include the *CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION ALBUM*, *MONTY PYTHON AT THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL* and *THE FAIRLY INCOMPLETE & RATHER BADLY ILLUSTRATED MONTY PYTHON SONG BOOK*. He was musical director for Eric Idle's two North American stage tours, *Eric Idle Exploits Monty Python* (2000) and *The Greedy Bastard Tour* (2003). This is his Broadway debut.

Monty Python's SPAMALOT

About the Play

Meet the Playwright

Monty Python

'Monty Python' was created in the late 1960s by Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin. The six members of the team had got to know each other gradually in the preceding years, firstly through university - Graham, John and Eric were at Cambridge together, while Terry Jones and Michael were at Oxford - and later through their work on various television comedy programmes, most notably The Frost Report.

In 1967, John and Graham co-wrote and starred in At Last, the 1948 Show, which also starred Marty Feldman, Tim Brooke-Taylor and Aimi MacDonald, with occasional appearances by Eric. The following year, Eric, Michael and Terry J wrote and starred in the children's show, Do Not Adjust Your Set (DNAYS), which also featured David Jason and the Bonzo Dog (Doo Dah) Band, who enjoyed chart success with 'I'm the Urban Spaceman'. Importantly, the series also featured animations by Terry Gilliam.

In early 1969, Michael and Terry J wrote and starred in a short-lived series called The Complete and Utter History of Britain, in which they presented various periods in British history as though television cameras had been there. The series was seen by John, who decided that he would like to work with Michael. A similar thought was had by Barry Took, a producer at the BBC, and he arranged a meeting between the two. John brought writing partner Graham along, and Michael brought DNAYS colleagues Terry J, Eric and Terry G. The six of them hit it off, sharing a love of The Goons and Spike Milligan's Q5 television show. With no questions asked, the BBC gave them a budget to produce 13 television shows...

The Flying Circus

The first episode of Monty Python's Flying Circus was broadcast on October 5, 1969. The show was buried late at night and was moved round the schedules to make way for other programmes. Occasionally it was dropped altogether,

while certain regions of the UK never got to see it at all. Despite all this, the show developed a significant word-of-mouth following; enough for the BBC to commission a second series in 1970. After the second series, the Pythons branched out into the world of film, with the release of And Now For Something Completely Different. Envisaged as a way of breaking Monty Python into the American market, it wasn't as successful as they'd hoped and the team returned to television. The third series of Flying Circus was shown in 1972-73, at the end of which, John decided that he'd been with the circus long enough. The fourth series, renamed simply Monty Python was shown in 1974. Having only six episodes, it is generally considered to be the weakest of the four television series, with John's departure unbalancing the group. Fortunately, John wasn't gone for good...

The Films

Learning from their experiences on And Now For Something Completely Different, the Pythons were determined to keep control of their next film. Decamping to Scotland between the third and fourth series of Flying Circus, the group filmed Monty Python and the Holy Grail on a tiny budget, with Terry Jones and Terry Gilliam directing. Despite some hardship during the filming process - the Scottish weather proving typically unfriendly - the team managed to put together a highly successful film. In a fortunate piece of timing, the release of Holy Grail coincided with the time that Python was first becoming popular in the USA, further boosting the success of the film and convincing the team that cinema was the way forward for Monty Python. The next Python film was the highly controversial Monty Python's Life Of Brian, released in 1979. The idea came from an off-the-cuff comment by Eric Idle, claiming that their next film would be called 'Jesus Christ: Lust for Glory'.

After many rewrites, including a working holiday to Barbados, the final script had almost nothing to do with Christ at all, and simply told the story of a man mistaken for the Messiah - the eponymous Brian. For a while, it seemed

as though the film would not be made, as the original funding was withdrawn. Fortunately, George Harrison, a Python fan, was desperate to see the film and set up a production company, 'Handmade Films', for that purpose. On its release, the film was attacked by fundamentalist Christians who campaigned, successfully in some areas, to have the film banned. Despite (or perhaps because of) this, the film went on to be an enormous success. Simultaneously hilarious, intelligent and thought-provoking, it is possibly the Pythons' finest hour.

After Brian came a recording of their 1980 stage performance at the Hollywood Bowl. The group performed some favourite sketches, while the crowd, many of whom were dressed in Python costumes, shouted the words along with them - the comedy equivalent of a rock concert.

The Pythons' next film was, as it turned out, the final true Python project. Monty Python's The Meaning Of Life was released in 1983 and was another financial and critical success, winning the Jury Prize at the Cannes film festival. The film contains some of their most outrageous material, including an attack on Catholic birth control policy in 'Every Sperm is Sacred', a live sex-education lesson in front of some bored schoolboys, Graham Chapman being chased off a cliff by a group of near-naked women, and, of course, the all-vomiting, all-exploding Mr Creosote. A fitting way to bring the Python era to a close.



Monty Python's SPAMALOT

King Arthur: Reality vs. Legend

Historical Context

Historical Arthur

King Arthur is the figure at the heart of the Arthurian legends. He is said to be the son of Uther Pendragon and Igraine of Cornwall. Arthur is a near mythic figure in Celtic stories such as Culhwch and Olwen. In early Latin chronicles he is presented as a military leader, the *dux bellorum*. In later romance he is presented as a king and emperor. One of the questions that has occupied those interested in King Arthur is whether or not he is a historical figure. The debate has raged since the Renaissance when Arthur's historicity was vigorously defended, partly because the Tudor monarchs traced their lineage to Arthur and used that connection as a justification for their reign. Modern scholarship has generally assumed that there was some actual person at the heart of the legends, though not of course a king with a band of knights in shining armor--though O.J. Padel in "The Nature of Arthur" argues that "historical attributes of just the kind that we find attached to Arthur can be associated with a figure who was not historical to start with." If there is a historical basis to the character, it is clear that he would have gained fame as a warrior battling the Germanic invaders of the late fifth and early sixth centuries. Since there is no conclusive evidence for or against Arthur's historicity, the debate will continue. But what can not be denied is the influence of the figure of Arthur on literature, art, music, and society from the Middle Ages to the present. Though there have been numerous historical novels that try to put Arthur into a sixth century setting, it is the legendary figure of the late Middle Ages who has most captured the imagination. It is such a figure, the designer of an order of the best knights in the world, that figures into the major versions of the legend from Malory to Tennyson to T. H. White. Central to the myth is the downfall of Arthur's kingdom. It is undermined in the chronicle tradition by the treachery of Mordred. In the romance tradition that treachery is made possible because of the love of Lancelot and Guinevere. Legendary Arthur His Name The name Arthur may be (and according to K. H. Jackson certainly is) a form of Artorius, a Roman name, but according to J. D. Bruce, it is possibly of Celtic origin, coming from *artos viros* (bear man). Bruce also suggests the possibility of a connection with Irish art (stone). His Life An outline of the hero's life is given by Geoffrey of Monmouth (twelfth century) in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* - History of the Kings of Britain. Just

how much of this life was Geoffrey's invention and how much was culled from traditional material is uncertain. He tells us that King Arthur was the son of Uther and defeated the barbarians in a dozen battles. Subsequently, he conquered a wide empire and eventually went to war with the Romans. He returned home on learning that his nephew Mordred had formed a rebellion and taken Guinevere, the queen. Shortly upon return, Arthur's final battle took place.

The saga built up over the centuries and Celtic traditions of Arthur reached the Continent via Brittany. Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* would become what many considered the standard 'history' of Arthur. In this, we are told of Arthur's conception when Uther approached Igraine who was made, by Merlin's sorcery, to resemble her husband. The child was given to Ector to be raised in secret. After Uther's death there was no king ruling all England. Merlin had placed a sword in a stone, saying that whoever drew it out would be king. Arthur did so and Merlin had him crowned. This led to a rebellion between eleven rulers which Arthur put down. He married Guinevere whose father gave him the Round Table as a dowry; it became the place where his knights sat, to avoid quarrels over precedence. A magnificent reign followed, Arthur's court becoming the focus for many heroes. In the war against the Romans, Arthur defeated the Emperor Lucius and became emperor himself. However, his most illustrious knight, Lancelot, became enamored of Guinevere. The Quest for the Holy Grail began and Lancelot's intrigue with the Queen came to light. Lancelot fled and Guinevere was sentenced to death by Arthur himself. Lancelot rescued her and took her to his realm. This led Arthur to crossing the channel and making war on his former knight.



Monty Python's SPAMALOT

King Arthur: Reality vs. Legend

Historical Context

While away from Britain, he left Mordred in charge. Mordred rebelled and Arthur returned to quell him. This led to Arthur's last battle on Salisbury Plain, where he slew Mordred, but was himself gravely wounded. Arthur was then carried off in a barge, saying he was heading for the vale of Avalon. Some said he never died, but would one day return. However, his grave was supposedly discovered at Glastonbury in the reign of Henry II (1154-89). King Arthur King Arthur is most known for his Kingly leadership, his loving rule, and even his ruthless judgment of Lancelot and Guinevere. But often a very important part of Arthur's life is forgotten: his skills as a general and knight. The date of Arthur's death is given by Geoffrey of Monmouth as AD 542. Malory places his life in the fifth century. Geoffrey Ashe puts forward the argument that Arthur is, at least to some extent, to be identified with the historical Celtic king Riothamus. Was Arthur fictitious or did he really live? Was he really a composite of a number of persons living at different times in British history? That is for all of us to decide for ourselves.

The Knights and the Round Table

Everyone has heard of the Knights of the Round Table, but many people are not familiar with any of the Noble Knights save for Lancelot. The Knights were men of courage, honor, dignity, courtesy, and nobleness. They protected ladies and damsels, honored and fought for kings, and undertook dangerous quests.

The Emblem of the Knights The emblem of the Knights of the Round Table worn round the necks of all the Knights was given to them by King Arthur as part of the ceremony of their being made a knight. The cross in the emblem was to remind them that they were to live pure and stainless lives, to strive after perfection and thus attain the Holy Grail. The Red Dragon of King Arthur represented their allegiance to the King. The Round Table was illustrative of the Eternity of God, the equality, unity, and comradeship of the Order, and singleness of purpose of all the Knights

The Round Table The twelfth-century chronicler Wace first introduces the notion of the Round Table, which he says Arthur had made so that all of the noble barons whom he attracted to his court would be

equally placed and served and none could boast that he had a higher position at the table than the others. Layamon expands on this notion, describing a riot at which many nobles vie for place and precedence at Arthur's table. A skilled craftsman then offers to make Arthur a table that will seat more than sixteen hundred and at which high and low will be on an equal footing because the table is round. According to the prose rendition of Robert de Boron's Merlin and the thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle, Uther Pendragon, instructed by Merlin, established the Round Table to symbolize the table of the Last Supper and the Grail Table established by Joseph of Arimathea at the command of the Holy Spirit. Uther gives the Round Table to Guinevere's father Leodegan, who in turn gives it to Arthur when he weds Guinevere. The number of seats at the Round Table varies in different sources, sometimes being said to seat twelve knights and the king, sometimes as many as 150. The Round Table has come to stand not only for the physical object at which Arthur and his knights sat but also for the order of knighthood and the code to which the knights committed themselves. The symbolic nature of the Round Table survives even into the youth groups of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. The founders of one of those clubs, the Knights of King Arthur, saw the roundness of Arthur's table and the equality it implied as representing 'democracy under leadership' and thus an ideal structure for a club for boys.



Monty Python's SPAMALOT

King Arthur: Reality vs. Legend

Historical Context

Spamalot and Arthurian Legend: What's real?

Though Monty Python's Spamalot is only very loosely based on Arthurian legends, some of the names and figures used in the story are actual figures from those stories. Read below to discover some of the important figures present in both Spamalot and Arthurian legend.

Lancelot

Lancelot is the greatest of Arthur's knights. Son of King Ban of Benwick, he is known as Lancelot of the Lake or Lancelot du Lac because he was raised by the Lady of the Lake. Among his many adventures are the rescue of the abducted Queen Guinevere from Meleagant, an unsuccessful quest for the Holy Grail and the rescue of the queen after she is condemned to be burned to death for adultery. Lancelot is loved by Elaine of Astolat, who dies because her love is unrequited. Elaine, the daughter of King Pellles, tricks Lancelot into sleeping with her and from that union Galahad is born. His love for Guinevere ultimately brings about the downfall of Arthur's realm.

The Holy Grail

The Holy Grail is generally considered to be the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper and the vessel used by Joseph of Arimathea to catch his blood as he hung on the cross. This significance, however, was introduced into the Arthurian legends by Robert de Boron in his verse romance "Joseph d'Arimathie" (sometimes also called *Le Roman de l'Estoire dou Graal*), which was probably written in the last decade of the twelfth century or the first few years of the thirteenth. In earlier sources as well as in some later ones, the Grail is sometimes something quite different. The term 'grail' comes from the Latin *gradale*, which means a dish brought to the table during various stages (Latin 'gradus') or courses of a meal. In Chrétien de Troyes and other early writers, the term 'grail' suggests such a plate. Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (first decade of the thirteenth century) presents the Grail as a stone which provides sustenance and prevents anyone who beholds it from dying within that week. In medieval romance, the Grail was said to have been brought to Glastonbury in Britain by Joseph of Arimathea and his followers. In the time of Arthur, the quest for the Grail was the highest spiritual pursuit. For Chrétien, author of

Perceval, and his continuators, Perceval is the knight who must achieve the Grail. For some other French authors, as for Malory, Galahad is the chief Grail knight, though others (Perceval and Bors in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*) also achieve the quest.

Sir Galahad

Galahad is the son of Lancelot and Elaine of Corbenic. Galahad was conceived when Elaine tricked Lancelot into thinking he was meeting and sleeping with Guinevere. Galahad is best known as the knight who achieves the quest for the Holy Grail. As the chosen knight he is allowed to sit in the Siege Perilous, the seat at the Round Table that is reserved for the Grail Knight. The first appearance of Galahad in medieval romance is in the thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle. His coming is predicted in the first romance in the cycle, the *Estoire del saint Graal*, where he is said to be the ninth in the line of Nascien, who was baptized by Josephus, son of Joseph of Arimathea, and who was one of those who is said to have brought Christianity to Britain. Galahad remains the pre-eminent Grail Knight in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*.

Camelot

Camelot is an imaginary place and thus it is perhaps pointless to speak of its location. In literary sources, it is usually situated in the south of England. Some have speculated that if Arthur actually existed he would have needed a base of operations. John Leland identified Camelot with Cadbury Castle, a hill fort in Somerset. Excavations carried out at the site in 1966-1970 confirmed that this large hill fort (with 1200 yards of perimeter surrounding an eighteen-acre enclosure and rising about 250 feet above the surrounding countryside) was refortified in the Arthurian era and was occupied by a powerful leader and his followers. In many medieval texts Arthur holds court at Caerleon or some other city. Camelot is first mentioned in the twelfth century in Chrétien de Troyes's *Lancelot*. In the thirteenth-century Vulgate Cycle, Camelot is said to have been converted by the son of Joseph of Arimathea, Josephus, who had built there the Church of St. Stephen, in which some texts say Arthur and Guinevere were married. Camelot becomes the principal city of Arthur's realm and remains so in many, though not all, later texts. In his *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Sir Thomas Malory identifies Camelot as Winchester.

Monty Python's SPAMALOT

Activities

IT'S ALL RELATIVE

OBJECTIVE: To develop analysis skills through comparison

ACTIVITY: The legends of King Arthur have captured people's imaginations for centuries. Monty Python's version of the Arthurian legends certainly is a different take on the stories. As a class, discuss the different aspects of Arthurian legend *SPAMALOT* uses. Look at the characters and the locations, especially. The Quest for the Holy Grail is used in both the legend and Monty Python, so discuss how the quest differs in each, as well. Write a paper discussing how the Knights in *SPAMALOT* both follow and do not follow the charge. Decide if you think the Monty Python knights are "good" knights.

YOU'RE THE WRITER

OBJECTIVE: To develop creative writing skills, stimulate imagination, and develop presentation skills

ACTIVITY: In *SPAMALOT*, there is a character named Sir Not-Appearing-In-This-Show. As a creative writing exercise, find a list of King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table and decide which knight (of the ones not used already in the show) could be Sir Not-Appearing-In-This-Show. First, conduct research about your knight. Look at the legends say he came to Round Table, what type of knight he was, some of the events in his life, and if applicable his role in the Quest for the Holy Grail. Then, write your knight into *SPAMALOT* in the style of Monty Python. You can add him into an existing scene or create a new scene based upon an event you discover in your research. Then, share your story with the class.

STARS ARE BORN

OBJECTIVE: To develop an understanding of plot, develop creative writing skills, stimulate imagination, encourage teamwork, and develop presentation skills

ACTIVITY: Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Have each group pick a scene from the story or from the film. Write a new version of the scene, including dialogue and actions, but the group's version of the particular scene should be no longer than five to ten lines of dialogue. Make sure the scene still conveys the major action and overall plot. Students may choose to write their scenes as comedy or use a similar tone as the one in the story. Refer to the synopsis and song list to identify the characters and the main idea of each scene. Assign members of the group a character role, and then act out the scene for the class. Instead of a dialogue limit, you may choose to limit the scenes based on time.



Monty Python's SPAMALOT

Activities

Write a Review

Explain to students that the director's job is to take the words on the script from the printed page to the stage and bring them to life. Explain that theater critics review shows and publish their opinions. For AmericanTheatreCritics.org, critic Sherry Eaker wrote, "My point of view was that it wasn't the theatre critic's place to tell the playwright what he or she should be doing; instead, the critic should focus on what is already there and explain either why it works or why it doesn't work."

After seeing the production, have each student write a review of Orlando Shakes' production of *Mothy Python's SPAMALOT*. The review should include one paragraph each for:

Introduction – What did you watch, where and when, and maybe, why?

The script – Did you like the writing, the story, the characters? Why or why not?

The score – Did you like the music? Why or why not?

The acting – Did you believe and care about the characters as portrayed? Why or why not?

The design – Did you like the set, costume and light designs? Why or why not?

The staging – How did the director stage the violence? Was it effective?

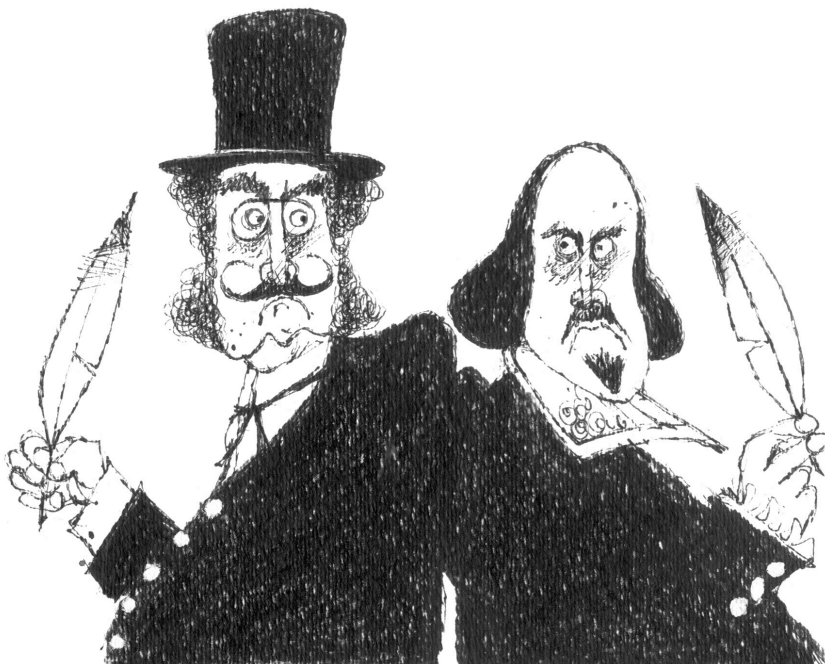
The audience – What ways did the audience respond to particular moments?

Conclusion – What will you remember about this performance?

If you wish, send your reviews to us at: anneh@orlandoshakes.org

We'd love to hear your opinions of our show!

Read more: How to Become a Theater Critic | eHow.com http://www.ehow.com/how_2079002_become-theater-critic.html#ixzz1v9tEyMnc



Monty Python's SPAMALOT

Discussion & Themes

DISCUSSION

What's Going On?

1. Who is your favorite major character in *SPAMALOT*? Which is your favorite minor character? In a couple of short sentences, explain why for each question.
2. What was your favorite scene in *SPAMALOT*? Explain with detailed synopsis of that scene.
3. Why do you think *SPAMALOT* is appealing to audiences?
4. What was your favorite song from *SPAMALOT*?
5. You have been asked to write a plot summary for *SPAMALOT* for a newspaper that is advertising the show. Write a short paragraph.
6. Do you "always look on the bright side of life?" How? It's not easy sometimes. Explain some of the things you do to look at life through positivity.
7. Why do you think Sir Robin is "not quite so brave as Sir Lancelot?"

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